

How Can I Help?

The job of a Member of Congress is to represent his or her congressional district. The usual notion is that this means voting on laws that are being considered by the Congress.

In addition to legislating, however, a Member of Congress provides a number of other important services to constituents to keep them better informed of what the federal government is doing and to help resolve problems involving federal government agencies. Outlined below are just some of the most frequent services that Congressman Tom Lantos provides to residents of the 12th Congressional District of California:

Help in Dealing with Federal Government Agencies – Frequently constituents appear to get the bureaucratic run-around from a federal government agency – a department does not respond to a request for information or documentation, an agency is slow in paying a small business for services it provided, or an agency erroneously takes action against the wrong person. Sometimes the problem is simply one of understanding how the government agency works or knowing which office to contact to resolve the problem. The congressional office has specialists who can guide you through the maze of telephone numbers, offices, and regulations to get the answers you seek. Frequently a letter or call from a Member of Congress can help cut through bureaucratic red tape. Congressman Tom Lantos often contacts government officials to resolve such constituent problems. For example, some constituents have had problems getting income tax refunds from the Internal Revenue Service. Recently, after intervention by the Congressional office, the IRS re-issued a check for some \$10,000 which had been improperly written.

Information on Legislation – The congressional office provides information about legislation – if a committee has held hearings on a bill, if the House or Senate has voted on it, which Member of Congress introduced it, the position of the Administration on the legislation, etc. The congressional office can also provide copies of bills for constituents.

Information about Federal Government Programs – There is an incredibly wide range of government programs that provide information and services to individuals, businesses, local governments, and other organizations. The problem comes in knowing what is available, where to go for information, and how to qualify for participation in specific programs. The congressional office can provide information about federal government programs that may be important to you.

Flags Flown Over the U.S. Capitol – Would you like to have an American flag that has been flown over our nation's Capitol? Congressman Tom Lantos can arrange for a flag, along with a certificate specifying the date on which it was flown. The certificate can be personalized for a special occasion. There is a modest cost for the flags and for the cost of shipping. Prices for flags range from **\$14.90** for a 3' x 5' nylon flag to **\$29.33** for a 5' x 8' cotton flag, including postage to mail the flag directly to your home. For information, please contact the congressional office.

Information and Help for Visitors to Our Nation's Capital – Each week thousands of Californians visit Washington, D.C. Congressman Lantos provides help and information for visitors to our



Congressman Tom Lantos discusses the role of California in the federal Union with visitors to our nation's Capitol at the statue of Father Junipero Serra, a founding father of California. September 9, 2000, marks the 150th anniversary of the admission of the state of California to the Union.

nation's capital. Passes are available through the Washington congressional office for visitors to observe the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate in session.

Internships in Washington, D.C., and California – Interns and fellows serve temporarily in the office of a Member of Congress in order for them to gain an understanding of the legislative process. Congressman Tom Lantos makes internships available in his offices in Washington and California in order to provide an educational experience for students, seniors, and others who wish to learn more about the workings of a congressional office and the operation of our country's democratic political institutions. If you are interested in an internship, contact the congressional office for information and an application.

Does the IRS Owe You Money?

Some 343 residents of California's 12th Congressional District (northern and central San Mateo County and southwestern San Francisco) are owed money by the United States government. These are individuals who should have received an income tax refund for taxes paid in the years 1996 to 1999, but for some reason the refund checks were returned to the IRS because the addresses had changed or were incomplete.

The largest undeliverable refund check is for \$9,677.00 and the smallest is for only \$1.15. The average amount is \$585.57.

Want to know if your name is on the list? Check the web page of Congressman Tom Lantos where you will find a list of the names and towns of individuals to whom the IRS owes money. (The amount of the check is not indicated.) The web address is: www.house.gov/lantos/

If your name is on the list, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 and your check will soon be in the mail. If you have any questions, you may also call the office of Congressman Tom Lantos. In San Mateo County the number is (650) 342-0300, and in San Francisco the number is (415) 566-5257.

CALL FOR HELP

California Office

San Mateo County Telephone – (650) 342-0300

San Francisco Telephone – (415) 566-5257

California Fax Number – (650) 375-8270

Washington Office

Congressman Tom Lantos

2217 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Washington Telephone – (202) 225-3531

Congressman Lantos on the Internet

<http://www.house.gov/lantos/>

TOM LANTOS

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business

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CALIFORNIA**



Washington Report

Federal Funds Improve Quality of Life

In the last fiscal year, over \$8 billion in federal government funds have come to San Mateo County and San Francisco, according to figures provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. (See table below.) These funds are important to the quality of life in our area, and they reflect the dynamic role which the federal government continues to play in the economic and social vitality of San Francisco and the Peninsula.

The largest amount of federal funds coming into our area – over \$2.5 billion – is for retirement and disability payments to individuals, including Social Security payments for senior citizens, as well as pensions for individuals who have served in our nation’s armed forces and those who have worked for the federal government. Also included are payments to individuals who suffer from work-related disabilities covered by the Social Security program. Other direct payments to individuals total over \$1.5 billion for such services as Medicare and unemployment insurance.

Federal government purchases of services and products from businesses in San Mateo County and San Francisco amount to three-quarters of a billion dollars, providing an important boost to our local economy.

Wages and salaries of federal government employees who work in these two counties, but who serve not only the Bay Area but the entire West Coast, bring an additional \$1.3 billion into our region.

Federal government programs make an important contribution to the quality of life in our area. For example, federal funding has been a critical component for expanding public transportation, including the extension of BART from Colma to the San Francisco International Airport and Millbrae. Recent legislation approved by the Congress, with the strong support of Congressman Tom Lantos, appropriates the next portion of the \$750 million which the federal government has agreed to provide for construction of BART to the airport.

Children and young people benefit signifi-

Congressman Tom Lantos discusses federal government policies on mental health with Tipper Gore, wife of Vice President Al Gore. Mrs. Gore has been a leading advocate for assuring equal treatment of mental and physical illnesses. (White House photograph.)



cantly from federal funding for education. The federal government provides funds for special education programs in our grade schools and high schools, assistance for students attending colleges and universities in our area, and funding for important research done at our institutions of higher education.

Other federal funds coming into these two counties have supported medical research at the Medical Center of the University of California at San Francisco; soundproofing of homes, schools, and public buildings in areas impacted by noise from the San Francisco International Airport; funding for additional police officers in San Francisco and communities up and down the Peninsula; and countless other projects that

have improved our quality of life.

These figures include all of San Mateo County and all of the City of San Francisco, an area that extends beyond the 12th Congressional District, which is represented by Congressman Tom Lantos. The 12th district includes northern and central San Mateo County and south-western San Francisco.

This two-county area also includes all of the 8th and part of the 14th congressional districts. The 8th district, which covers northern and eastern San Francisco, is well represented by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. The 14th district, which includes southern San Mateo County as well as northern Santa Clara County, is well represented by Congresswoman Anna Eshoo.

Federal Funds Helping San Mateo County and San Francisco Fiscal Year 1999

Social Security, other retirement and disability payments to individuals	\$2,523 million
Other direct payments (Medicare, unemployment insurance, food stamps)	\$1,502 million
Federal government purchases from local businesses	\$750 million
Federal payroll in San Mateo County and San Francisco	\$1,315 million
Grants to local governments (transportation, Medicaid, etc)	\$2,196 million
Total Federal Expenditures	\$8,286 million

Town Meetings

Saturday – September 23

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, September 23. Congressman Tom Lantos will hold town meetings to report on activities in the Congress and how they affect all of us in the Bay Area. This will also be an opportunity to discuss key national and international issues with Tom. Town meetings will be held at these times and locations:

Please join Tom for town meetings at these times and locations:

10:00 a.m. San Francisco
Stonestown Family YMCA
333 Eucalyptus Drive
San Francisco

1:30 p.m. San Mateo
San Mateo City Council Chambers
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo

Want a Copy of the U.S. Constitution?

The Congress has published a booklet containing the full text of the U.S. Constitution, including the amendments that have been added since 1787. The text of the Declaration of Independence is also included. If you would like a copy, please fill out the information and send it to the address indicated at the right.

Please *print* the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Zip Code _____

Send this coupon to: **Congressman Tom Lantos**
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

7 Appointed to Service Academies

Seven young women and men from the 12th Congressional District – northern and central San Mateo County and southwestern San Francisco – have been nominated by Congressman Tom Lantos for positions at United States service academies. The seven began their training this summer, and they will graduate in the Class of 2004.

“I am honored and delighted to nominate these outstanding young people to our nation’s service academies,” said Congressman Tom Lantos. “These appointments continue the long tradition of our area having one of the best records in the country for appointments to military academies. This large number of appointments – particularly at a time when the number of slots has been reduced – is a great tribute to the high caliber and the outstanding leadership potential of these young women and men. It is also a very positive reflection upon the quality of education that is provided by our local schools.”

Three young men have been accepted to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland – Andrew Robert Alvarado and Joseph A. Mankiewicz, both of San Francisco, and Thomas F. Yale of South San Francisco.

Annelies T. Gargan of San Francisco, Stephen Hodges of Foster City, and Kenneth C. Yambing of South San Francisco have begun their training at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Nicola C. Hill of San Francisco has begun her training at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In addition to these seven service academy appointments, three other young men have been appointed to the Northwestern Preparatory School of the Naval Academy Foundation Program, and it is expected that they will receive appointments to the U.S. Naval Academy next year. The three young men from the 12th Congressional District are among only 70 individuals nationally who have been selected. The three are David Michael Hall of Pacifica, Frank P. Verducci of Burlingame, and Gregory Wood of San Francisco.

Congressman Lantos is now accepting applications from young men and women seeking a nomination to a service academy for the class of 2005. Those accepted will begin their education in the summer of 2001. Completed applications must be

received by November 1, 2000, and candidates will be evaluated in late November or early December by a local panel of educators and former military officers from all branches of the armed forces. Candidates will be interviewed by the panel as part of the selection process.

Applicants must be United States citizens, graduate from high school before August 2001, and must be between the ages of 17 and 22.

To request an application form, please write to: Congressman Tom Lantos, 400 South El Camino Real, Suite 410, San Mateo, CA 94402, or call (650) 342-0300 from San Mateo County or (415) 566-5257 from San Francisco.

You will find additional information about the service academy selection process under “Need Help” on Tom Lantos’ Internet web site. The Internet address is http://www.house.gov/lantos/html_files/help_5.html

Immigration Records Remain in San Bruno Documents of Special Interest to Chinese Americans

At the insistence of Congressman Tom Lantos, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) have agreed to make changes in record handling procedures that will assure that immigration files in San Bruno will be retained there. This victory is the result of an agreement between Congressman Lantos and Doris Meissner, Commissioner of the INS. Nationally, INS files are being centralized in a federal record center in Missouri.

“I am delighted that we were able to work out this change in procedures to assure that San Bruno immigration files remain in San Bruno,” said Congressman Lantos. “These records have enormous significance, particularly for the Chinese-American community in our area. I want to thank leaders of the Chinese-American community in the Bay Area who worked with me on this matter, and also officials of the INS and NARA who understood the importance of this issue and worked with me to make these changes.”



Congressman Tom Lantos congratulates nominees to Service Academies shortly before they began their schooling (from the left) Thomas Yale of South San Francisco, Naval Academy; Kenneth Yambing of South San Francisco and Annelies Gargan of San Francisco, U.S. Military Academy at West Point; Congressman Lantos; Joseph Mankiewicz of San Francisco, Naval Academy; and Stephen Hodges of Foster City, U.S. Military Academy at West Point. (Photo by Beverly Swanson.)

Women Deserve Equal Pay

Congressman Tom Lantos has expressed strong support for legislation intended to bring greater progress in assuring that women receive equal pay for equal work. When the Equal Pay Act was signed by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, women earned an average of 61 cents for every dollar earned by men. Today, a third of a century later, women still earn only about 75 cents for every dollar earned by men. Our own state of California is only slightly better than the national average, with women earning about 76 cents for every dollar earned by men.

Congressman Lantos said, "The gender gap in wages is one of the most pressing issues facing American families, our national economy, and working women in particular. Women often provide a significant part of their families' income, and in many cases they are the sole family wage-earner. Lower pay for women requires them to spend longer time away from their families to earn the same as a male coworker, and lower pay means lower pensions when women retire. All of this translates into discrimination and disadvantage for women. That is the reason I strongly support the Paycheck Fairness Act."

The Paycheck Fairness Act would strengthen the Equal Pay Act to provide more effective remedies to women who are not being paid equal wages for doing equal work, and it would place gender on the same legal footing as race or ethnicity in dealing with wage discrimination. The legislation would help by prohibiting employers from penalizing workers for sharing salary information with coworkers. The legislation would provide for compensatory and punitive damages for gender discrimination in wages.

"The wage gender gap is at its lowest point in American history," said Tom Lantos, "but that is not good enough. It is



Congressman Tom Lantos responds to question raised by a veteran during a recent town meeting in San Bruno. Town meetings provide an opportunity for constituents to discuss national and international issues of interest with their congressman. (Photo by Bob King.)

time for us as a nation to say that we value the work that women do. We value the contributions that women make to society,

and we must make the commitment to pay women what they are worth."

Congress Approves Electronic Signatures

After months of negotiations between industry and consumer groups, the Congress approved the "Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (e-sign)" (S. 761). The legislation has the bipartisan support of the California congressional delegation.

The Act, which President Clinton signed into law, gives the same validity to contracts executed electronically by so-called "electronic signatures" as to a traditional signature on paper. It is expected to make business-to-business and business-to-consumer transactions easier and more efficient.

The principal concern of Congressman Tom Lantos has been to assure adequate consumer protections. The final language, for instance, requires specific consent from consumers to receive notices electronically and requires that notice of cancellation of utility services, health and life insurance, and mortgages may not be executed electronically. The bill also allows federal and state regulatory agencies to continue to require written filings of records if there is a compelling government interest. In most instances, however, the bill is intended to pre-empt state law and establish national standards for the validity of electronic signatures as long as consumers are protected.

"This legislation is an important step forward in making e-commerce more efficient and effective, while at the same time assuring that consumers are protected," said Congressman Lantos.

Funding for Air Travel Improvements

With the strong leadership and support of Tom Lantos, the Congress has adopted new legislation ensuring some \$40 billion over the next three years for our nation's airports and the air traffic control system. This represents a 25 percent increase in aviation spending.

The bulk of the money will come from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, which is funded by a modest fee on airline tickets and which has been in place for some time. In the past, the full amount in the Trust Fund was not spent for air travel improvements as originally envisioned. The unspent balance was used to offset other government spending. The new legislation that was adopted by Congress and signed by the

President insures that the entire Trust Fund will be spent to fund needed aviation programs.

The legislation should result in increased spending at our nation's airports over the next three years for improvements in airline safety and efficiency. For Bay Area residents, this will provide needed improvements at the San Francisco International Airport.

The additional funds should also help speed up noise reduction efforts for communities impacted by aircraft noise at the San Francisco Airport. In the next few years, the Airport Authority will spend some \$120 million on a sound-insulation program for families living in noise impacted areas.